

## Oracle State Park, Center for Environmental Education VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER, December 2015

### EXCITING NEWS:

Most of you know by now that **Oracle State Park has New Restrooms!**

A crane dropped the new Green Flush Technology facility into place outside the Kannally Ranch House wall on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, complete with running water and flushing toilets! Every time a visitor uses the sink to wash hands, the water drains into a storage reservoir that then recycles the water to flush the toilets. It is a superior customer experience compared to the porto-johns of the past. The previous ranch house porto-johns have been moved to both the Oak-Woodland Area and Remote parking lot to improve facilities in those two locations as well.



Kudos to Ranger Dale Redies, for having an eye for selecting the color and choice of faux-wood floor on the inside ☺ We love our new bathrooms!

Help spread the word that the **Oracle State Park Gift Shop** has new park specific merchandise to check out -- Artsy **holiday ornaments!** **Made in Arizona** products! Now available: an **Arizona State Parks Gift Card** - *Give the gift of Adventure this holiday season!* ASP gift cards can be used at select parks to purchase: day pass admission, camping, ramada rentals, cabin rentals, gift-shop purchases, cave tours and more. More info at <http://azstateparks.itinio.com/giftcard> -- or visit the OSP office.

Check out the improvements to the **Information Kiosk at our American Avenue parking lot**, thanks to help from an Americorps work party held there on Wednesday, December 9. There is now **board space available** to decorate with information for the public about **Friends of Oracle State Park** and the **International Dark Sky Park** designation, so volunteers are welcome to contribute postings.

More exciting news – in an online article that came out in October about best places to stargaze in parks nationally, **Oracle State Park is listed among 20 of the darkest places in the U.S.!** It is impressive for our park to be listed among such well known sites as: Big Bend NP in Texas, Capitol Reef NP & Natural Bridges Monument in Utah, Chaco Cultural National Historic Park in New Mexico, Death Valley NP in California/Nevada, and Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument in Arizona, as well as a few others in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Colorado.

Also... Rangers in collaboration with the Arizona State Parks education team are excited for the arrival by the new year, of five **new Interpretive Education panels** created for Oracle State Park. The panels include a **Welcome/Orientation** sign to introduce visitors to what the park has to offer. Four additional panels will be displayed along the Nature Trail to highlight **Wildlife diversity, Vegetation, Geology and Water resources**. This project was funded by a generous donation the park received a few years ago when the company, Subaru, rented the Kannally Ranch House for a promotional event.

**HELP NEEDED:**

Program guide training to be scheduled in the new year – let a ranger know if you're interested or know someone who might enjoy leading our scripted trail programs.

**Environmental Education School Programs – upcoming dates:****Oracle Odyssey Program:**

**Thursday, January 28**, for 60 students at 10am (6<sup>th</sup> grade), 4 guides needed.

**Thursday, March 3**, for 50 students at 10am (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade), 4 guides needed.

**Oracle Adventure Program:**

**Friday, February 26**, for 62 students (1<sup>st</sup> grade), morning start time tba.

**House cleaning** – regular dusting of Gift-shop especially, & surfaces through house where interpretive displays sit.

**Distributing marketing postcards** around Oracle and Tucson areas. Let us know where you can take them and pick up a stack next time you're at the park office.

**THANKS:**

Thanks for trail maintenance help this fall: **Darrell Klesch, Jane Redman** & running buddies, **Jack Blevins, Gary Gilmore, Al Crawford, Wayne Jeronimus, Barry Lyons**, and **Denny Anderson**. We appreciated extra trail help as well by Catalina State Park rangers, **Jack McCabe, Jim Dees and Ian Jarosak**.

Welcome new onsite volunteer caretakers: **Patrick and Katie Williams**. We're very happy to have you here and appreciate your help with maintenance projects and visitor contact this season!

Thanks **Evaline Auerbach** –for your initiative to bring the Adam Block Astrophotography Exhibit to the Kannally Ranch House. And **welcome** as a new park volunteer!

Thanks gardeners! **Mike McFarland, Jane Redman, Chuck LeFevre, Cindy Krupicka, and Laurie Bryant**. Here are two changes to the current irrigation schedule: Start Time 9pm for all areas, each valve on a 2 hour cycle. Also, Program A has no water days (lower dry area at west end wall & upper Chihuahuan wall).

Thanks **Wolfgang Mueller**– for your skill with keeping gators running, helping with hazardous trees, and offering Mineralogy Programs for the public.

Thanks **Shay Cardell and Don Rafferty** for your help this fall as trail guides for school programs. Thanks **Jill Gomery** for baking mesquite cookies!

Thanks again for publicity support, and for driving around to distribute flyers and brochures: **Val Bembenek, Jill Gomery, Anne Lucic and Wendy Ostrander**.

Thanks for your help in the office/gift-shop and gatehouse! –**Jill Gomery, Anne Lucic, Evaline Auerbach, Katie Williams and Dave Nevins.**

### **MORE THANKS...**

**FOSP** –for supporting the birding & breakfast event. Big thanks to **Anne Lucic** for coordinating the breakfast; and **Kathe Anderson**, volunteer from Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park, who returned to Oracle to offer this exceptionally fun and educational birding weekend.

**Hilary Cox** – for assisting with volunteer program records

**Mary Bast** – for leading guided house tours!

**Bob Elder** – AZSDM volunteer, for your presentation on “Seasons of the Sonoran Desert”

**David Ellis** – for reporting on problem areas along the park boundary fence-line

**Bob & Prudy Bowers**, for Audubon bird walks

**Mary Huebner, Jane Redman, and Laurie Bryant** - for weekly weather readings

**Mike Weasner** -for your digital photography workshop

**Dick Boyer** – for your programs: Bear Necessities and Bighorn Basics

**Gaston Meloche** - for guided hikes

**Stan Bembenek** – for waterhole & wildlife camera support (& again, thanks for offering your digital photography workshop)

Sorry for anyone I missed mentioning! Thank you all again for the many ways you show your park support.

### **SOME RECENT WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS:**

Horse lubber & Red winged grasshoppers, Walking sticks, White tail deer, Coyote, Bobcat, Javelina, baby Tarantulas; Black tailed rattlesnake, Western diamondback rattlesnake, Sonoran whipsnake, baby Gopher snake; Yellow rumped warbler, American kestrel, Blue-gray gnatcatcher, Ruby crowned kinglet, Meadowlark, Dark eyed junco, Pyrrhuloxia, Lincoln’s sparrow, Northern flicker, Bridled titmouse...to name a few.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

[www.azstateparks.com/Parks/ORAC](http://www.azstateparks.com/Parks/ORAC)

**Ongoing through December 20: Astrophotography Exhibit at the Kannally Ranch House, through December 20.** Adam Block of the University of Arizona’s Mt. Lemmon Sky Center, is recognized around the world as a leading astrophotographer. The images he produces as part of public outreach programs are published in magazines, books, posters and widely on the internet. He was the 2012 recipient of the Hubble Award among several notable highlights to his career. Six of his amazing images will be on display at the Kannally Ranch House through December 20.

**Saturday, December 12: Holiday Wreath-making Workshop, 1pm.** Make your own holiday wreath using plant material gathered at the park, including soapberry, mistletoe, buckwheat, manzanita, juniper and more. Space is limited; please call for a reservation. The workshop fee of \$10 includes park admission.

**Sunday, December 13: Guided Tour of the historic Kannally Ranch House, begins at 1pm** with docent Mary Bast. Tours last 45 minutes through rooms and patio levels extending down the hillside. Learn more about one of the earliest cattle ranching families to Oracle, and the architectural treasure they left behind. No reservation needed.

**Sunday, December 19: Guided Hike.** Begins at **8:15am** for approximately 6 miles. Hike the Granite Overlook Trail to Cherry Valley Wash and Loop back to the Kannally Ranch House. Reservation required, call Guide: Gaston Meloche 638-5404.

**Also, Sunday, December 19: Guided Kannally Ranch House Tour begins at 11am.** See description above, note different start time.

**Sunday, December 20: Astronomy Program.** Adam Block of the Mt. Lemmon Sky Center will offer a presentation and short film to close out his Astrophotography Exhibit, on display at the Kannally Ranch House since November. **3pm** in the living room. Reservation suggested. Free with park admission.

**Beginning January 2, 2016, guided tours of the historic Kannally Ranch House** will be offered to the drop in public **regularly each Saturday and Sunday at 11am.** Alternate times may be added by reservation.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**